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We Are Fifteen in Honduras

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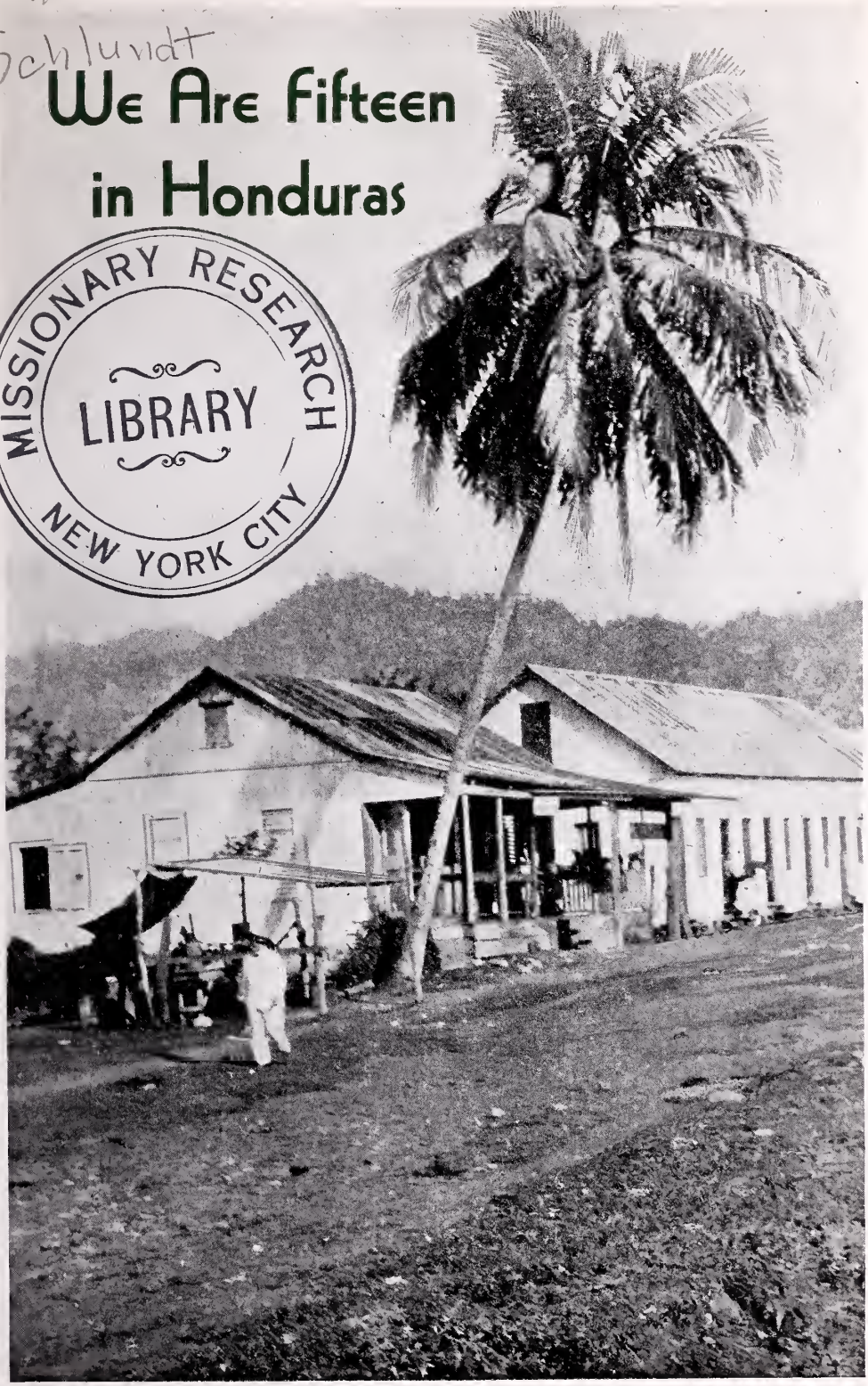

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WE ARE FIFTEEN
IN HONDURAS

Edited by META S. SCHLUNDT

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FOREWORD

The title of this latest summing up of our missionary enterprise in Honduras was suggested by the coincidence that, in the fifteen years of carrying on work in Honduras, fifteen missionaries have been called to this field. The fact that three of these have had to return to the homeland because of climatic and health conditions has been offset, numerically speaking, by the addition of three native teachers; so that in point of the number of workers it may still be said: "We are fifteen."

In yet another way we find the title a suitable one for this brain-child. It is very much in the predicament of a fifteen-year-old who is still wearing some of last year's apparel, slightly too short in the sleeves, and has had added to this some of big brother's hand-me-downs, slightly ill-fitting elsewhere. In other words, this booklet is a revision of material gathered from several sources and added to in various ways, on narrow margins of time.

It therefore appears before the public somewhat in the rôle of such a fifteen-year-old—quite self-conscious as to the inadequacy and the fitness of the garments which an economy of time forced upon him, but nevertheless smiling bravely in an attempt to "do a good turn" wherever his humble services may be needed in presenting "The Appeal of Honduras."

Meta S. Schlundt.

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CHAPTER I. HONDURAS

If Honduras had been suggested to you as a new field for missionary endeavor, before our church entered this country, what arguments might have occurred to you, for or against?

A. The Country

Honduras is one of the five Central American republics. It borders on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The principal ports of the Atlantic coast are only three and one-half to four days' sea voyage distant from New Orleans. With the growing banana trade, steamer service is offered several times a week, both from New Orleans and New York.

The area of Honduras is 46,250 square miles, similar to that of New York State, which is 47,000 square miles, and that of Pennsylvania, which is 46,000 square miles.

The population is estimated at 854,184—an average of eighteen per square mile.

The largest towns are: Tegucigalpa, the capital, with some 25,000 inhabitants; Comayagua, the old Spanish capital; Danli, on the southern slope; and Amapala, the southern port. On the northern slope San Pedro, with 16,000 inhabitants, is fast becoming a commercial center. The Atlantic coast ports are La Ceiba, Tela, Trujillo, Omoa, and Puerto Cortes, the latter outranking the others in

value of imports as well as exports. The eastern portion of Honduras is, to a large extent, unexplored and consists in part of vast swamps and forests. If properly drained, it may become the richest part of the country. As it is, the people are moving down towards the plantation country of the northwestern section. Little settlements of workmen are here beginning to dot the country.

B. Resources

The resources are quite varied, according to the section of the country.

Honduras may be divided into three zones. The mountain backbone running along the western part of the entire American continent extends through the center of the Republic, rising to over 5,800 feet in the higher parts and sending forth beautiful foot hills as far as both the Atlantic and Pacific coast fringes. This central strip forms an extensive mountain area with a character all its own. There are fertile valleys and plateaus like that of Comayagua, some 45 by 25 miles in extent, and smaller valleys and depressions where the raising of corn, beans, plantains (variety of banana), coffee, cocoa, tobacco, sugar cane, etc. has made small towns and settlements possible. In between, isolated farmers effect clearings—a few acres each, and make a scanty living. Some engage in cattle raising. There is no frost except in a few places of exceptionally high altitude. The rainfall is sufficient to produce regular crops. If the frugal, persevering farmer in this section were supplied with better implements and acquainted with better methods of cultivation, he could be fairly prosperous, even under the handicaps of steep hillsides and rocky areas. Good timber of various sorts, including stately pine, are at his service, although the lack of machinery and cooperation largely prevent its being put to use. The chief wealth of the mountain section, however, lies in various minerals, known to be present in many places. Among these are gold, silver, copper, iron, lead, antimony, and mercury. Only in a few instances are actual mining operations carried on.

A second zone is that of the Pacific slope, capable of supporting a large population, but suffering somewhat from dry spells following a tropical rainy season. Most of the sarsaparilla used in our country for flavoring and medicinal purposes comes from this part of Honduras.

The third zone, consisting of the coast strip along the Atlantic

in the north, is not handicapped by this prolonged lack of rain. Here the rains, even in the off season, are fairly regular and all the crops of the southern temperate and semi-tropical countries can be produced in abundance. Rubber trees, cocoanut palms, and various trees yielding building lumber are found in the forest. The rich black soil of the coast and river areas brings forth the highest yield of bananas, sugar, corn, sweet potatoes, pineapples, etc. Already United States fruit companies have cooperated with progressive Hondurans in the development of great banana plantations extending for miles inland and containing railroad systems of their own. In recent years millions of dollars' worth of bananas were shipped from the port of Puerto Cortes alone, and the trade is bound to expand further.

C. Form of Government

The form of government is republican.

The constitution separates the functions of the church and state, guaranteeing religious liberty to all. Law and order are maintained, foreigners are not molested, but rather respected. Several hundred post-offices and telegraph offices make inter-communications between all parts of the country and with the outer world possible. A spirit of progressiveness, inviting stimulation and wise direction, is manifesting itself in some parts.

Politically, Honduras is divided into seventeen departments, a department corresponding to a state in our country. In addition to these seventeen departments, there is one territory, Mosquitia. Tegucigalpa is the capital of the Republic.

Review Questions

1. What is the approximate area of Honduras?
2. Sketch a map of Honduras, noting chief cities and areas of commercial interest.
3. What is the present government of Honduras?
4. What general impression of government stability have you received from the daily press?

CHAPTER II. THE PEOPLE

Why is it important to investigate racial characteristics, living conditions, economic status, etc. of a people when launching a missionary program?

A. Racial Groups

Honduras, with its area of approximately 46,000 square miles and a moderate tropical climate, could easily contain and sustain a population ten times greater than its present one of more than three-fourths million. While some areas are fairly well populated, others are almost uninhabited, as, for instance, the northeast, though this part is believed to be one of the richest of the Republic in natural resources. Like most of the Central-American countries, Honduras has seen no appreciable foreign immigration during the past centuries, and also not much increase of its indigenous population.

According to available statistics, the population is composed of the following groups: Indians, 10%; mixed, 80%; whites, 5%; Caribs and Jamaican Negroes, 5%.

1. Indians

The so-called Indian is the original inhabitant, unmixed with white or Negro, about whose origin nothing quite authoritative has been ascertained. He is brown to light yellow, of medium stature, and well developed. His features are generally regular and rather pleasing, eyes dark, hair black and often wavy. Of the Indian it is said that he is generally of an amiable disposition, docile, and intelligent. Quoting an historian: "The Indian of Honduras. . . . is law-abiding, quiet in domesticity, and brave in spirit."

The Indians are chiefly inhabitants of the country districts, where they live on little isolated farms, in small villages and small towns. Most of them are small farmers and laborers. In some parts they occupy themselves with some native industry, such as the making of Panama hats and pottery or mat-weaving, etc.

Tribal distinctions among them, with but few exceptions, have disappeared; and the intermixing of the various originally separate tribes has practically obliterated tribal types. The same is said to be true of some smaller Indian tribes living in the little-explored regions of the Territory of Mosquitia (northeast) and in some of

the less accessible mountain regions. These mountain tribes are very difficult to contact, fleeing, when possible, at the approach of a white man. Since the establishment of our new mission station in Yoro, these Indians will be within reach of our missionaries. Those living in the villages of southern Honduras have been in part evangelized by the Friends' Mission. Intermarriage of the Indian with the foreign immigrant since the Spanish conquest has resulted in a large percentage of mixed population, known as Ladinos.

2. Ladinos

The Ladinos form by far the largest group in Honduras, constituting, as has been said, about eighty percent of the entire population. They represent in appearance all ingredient types, from brown to white in complexion and of all shades of hair and eyes, the dark predominating. Their features range from the classically regular and beautiful to the direct opposite.

Indian boy in doorway of his home.

The representatives from the ranks of the mixed element live principally in the towns and cities, though they are found everywhere and in all walks of life, rural and urban, in farming, ranching, trading, in the trades, the professions, and politics, as well as in common labor. On the north coast hundreds of them find employment in the foreign-owned banana industry. In social life they stand on every rung of the ladder from the bottom to the top.

For the average country as well as the town dweller, the housing problem is solved very simply. A framework of sticks heavily plastered with mud (clay) for the walls and a roof serve as a house. Such houses of grass or palm branches

are not found in the cities because they are prohibited by law. There we find homes built of wood or adobe, the better class living in modern homes similar to California bungalows.

The furnishing of the more modest homes, whether in village or city, does not run the owner into great debt. A crude bed, a box for clothes, a simply made table and a chair or two, more often stools covered with untanned hides of animals, complete the home.

These crude beds are constructed in various ways, a large number being made by driving four posts into the dirt floor and joining them with a frame, or sometimes by simply building a frame from one post to another without driving these posts into the ground, and interweaving ropes or leather strips across, as was done by our early pioneers. Similar to these pioneer beds, they are sometimes built in corners, the two walls serving to attach the ropes. In the place of ropes or leather, branches of trees are nailed across in washboard effect. A straw mat, a thin cotton blanket or sheets made of sacks, and Spanish moss pillows complete the bed. Sometimes piles of clothing serve as pillows. Night apparel is not a problem—the native either sleeping in all of his clothes or in none at all.

Hammocks are found in almost every home, for afternoon siestas, and they are also pressed into service at night for beds. Mats on the floor serve for the children, and burlap bags, hung from the sides of the beds, serve as cradles for the babies.

Usually there is only one room, which serves all purposes—as bedroom, living-room, dining-room, and kitchen. The cooking is done in a thatch-covered shed or in the house. As to kitchen furniture, that is simplicity itself: a few stones and mud for the range, the open air above for the chimney, a large flat tortilla stone and stone rolling-pin for grinding the corn, a clay plate that can be heated for baking the tortillas, and a pot and pan or two. The making of the tortillas is an interesting process. Before grinding the corn, it is cooked with wood ashes, like hominy, and, when cool, washed in the river by changing it from one bucket to another and pouring on fresh water. Then it is placed on the stone, which is about twelve by eighteen inches rectangular, and ground by means of the stone rolling-pin. Some use the more modern method of grinding in a mill. (Coffee is also roasted and ground by means of the tortilla stone.) There is an art to the way in which this moist ground corn, with no other ingredient added, is then shaped

Ladino boys entering Bethel Boys' Home

with the hands into a round cake—about the size of a hot cake—and baked on the clay or iron tortilla plate on top of the wood fire. This is the bread of the natives, which together with red beans and thick black coffee sweetened with brown sugar constitutes a monotonous diet three times a day. Occasionally eggs or hard white cheese are added to this diet. Meat is seldom on the menu in the interior villages, though it may be had in the larger towns.

The Ladino housewife thus carries on her home-making with very simple equipment. Her one-room house often contains, beside the family, some fowl, dogs, cats, a pig and maybe a goat.

The native of the lower ranks is less primitive in regard to his dress than in his living and his food, and fondness for fineries is manifested on all festive occasions. It goes without saying that the

better educated native has a better built, more roomy, and more completely furnished home with proper sanitation and that the white and other higher-class Honduran enjoys most of the modern conveniences and even luxuries of living.

3. The Caribs

The Carib, who is believed to have immigrated from some West-Indian islands some two centuries ago, still retains a distinct individuality as regards appearance, language, customs, and habitat. He is described as "peaceable, friendly, ingenious, and industrious." The Carib is black, like the Negro, yet different of feature, medium of stature, but very strong. In addition to the Caribs, we find some Negroes living principally along the Atlantic coast, where they are employed by the big fruit-growing and -exporting companies. The Negro is little different from the type prevalent in the States.

The Caribs live almost exclusively along the north coast, on the shore of the Caribbean Sea. They are found segregated in groups in towns and villages, making their livelihood by petty farming, trading, and fishing. The Carib women are exceptionally clean about their homes.

Caribs

A Ladino kitchen

They carry on trade by selling fish, cocoanut oil, and starch. The latter is derived from the Yucca plant, which is not at all like the plant of that name in the United States. The tuberous roots of this plant, similar to sweet potatoes, are used for food. They are grated as we might grate potatoes for potato pancakes. The juice is drained from the pulp. The pulp is pressed or molded into very thin cakes and baked on a hot plate to a sort of thin crisp cracker. They vary their diet with fish fried in cocoanut oil, which they themselves produce from the cocoanuts growing all along the Caribbean Sea. They also use black coffee and tropical fruits such as pineapple, oranges, grapefruit, mangoes, guavas, and avocados. So far our missionaries have not worked among the Caribs, although there are a few Christians among them, who have been contacted by other Christians. The majority still retain the pagan customs of their ancestors, while some are nominally Catholic.

4. The White Element

The small white population is mostly in the larger agricultural, commercial, and mining enterprises and in the professional and political life, with residence in the more important industrial, commercial, and political centers. Some of them came in as invaders,

later others as immigrants. The latter made the country their home without assimilating racially with the natives. They represent practically every national and racial type of Europe, with the Hispano-Latin predominating.

B. The Challenge

In keeping with the other Latin-American countries, agriculture and natural resources are barely developed. The methods of the native farmers are primitive and crude. The same can also be said with regard to the stock-raising industry. Trade and commerce, mining and lumber-cutting enterprises are growing, but the lack of roads and adequate transportation facilities stand in the way of rapid development.

The larger foreign corporations engaged in growing and exporting fruit, mining and lumbering industries are bringing into the country the capital to develop it and are giving employment to a large number of the population. This also provides a very considerable source of revenue for the government.

On the other hand, it does not encourage native individuals or groups to carry on similar enterprises for themselves.

The recurrent political upheavals—entailing, inevitably, instability of purpose and effort—as well as a chronic lack of public funds largely account for the inadequate development of educational institutions, ways and means of transportation, and methods of providing for public charities such as caring for the sick, insane, aged, orphaned, blind, and otherwise helpless.

We turn, then, to the question of our responsibility regarding Honduras. Have we a spiritual responsibility regarding it? We face the fact that foreign capital is flowing into the country with an ever increasing volume and power for its own material gain and profit. Since American capital does not lack means, men, and courage in developing the material resources, ought not also American Christianity find the means, the men, and the vision to enlist forces that have as their aim and object the moral uplift and spiritual welfare of the people?

Review Questions

1. How does a sparsely-settled country increase the problem of evangelization and affect the number of people that can be reached by a given number of missionaries?

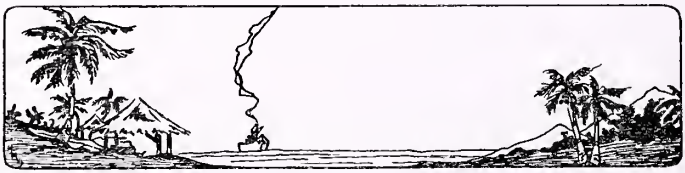
A Problem.—The territory undertaken for evangelization by our Church covers an area of 5,315 square miles. The population of this territory is 140,000. There are twelve missionaries on this field and five native evangelists. This makes how many square miles and how many people per missionary?

2. What type of missionary activities would seem to be needed by the types of people in Honduras?

3. Make a comparison of the living conditions of the laboring class in Honduras with the laboring classes in the United States, in India.

4. What is the general character of each group of Hondurans?

5. How is the population distributed?



III. RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

Why might it be more difficult to enlist the Church in a missionary enterprise in a country nominally Christian than in one that has been definitely untouched by Christianity?

A. Religious History

The Hondurans, like most of the Central and South American peoples, have all along been considered Christians. That has been one of the reasons why the evangelical Churches of North America have until recently given so little attention to evangelizing these neighbor republics of our own continent. Does not their Christianity date back four centuries to the time of the Spanish conquest, the conquest with cross and sword? And have they not since then been under the care of the Roman Catholic Church? Nominally they are Christians, yes, but not in the sense of believing and worshipping Christ as the Gospels present him; for they do not know him.

They have churches, "Catholic temples" (templos Catolicos), in the more important towns and places. There are priests in some of these places, and where none reside, they are visited occasionally by an itinerant priest or by one from the larger towns. Their Christian life consists of obedience to the Church, which means submitting to its dictates and mandates and supporting it. Some of the churches, in keeping with the early importance of the place and the period in which they were built, are, as regards architecture and ornamentation, furniture and finishings, of high class and are resplendent with shrines, paintings, and images of the Lord, his mother, and a host of saints. Others are of the simplest and most primitive construction, with shabby interior. Attendance at mass, at other rites and services, and at the confessional is small and chiefly composed of women and children. Very few men are seen at any of the services, unless it be a wedding or baptism, and then not because of any religious interest.

In Honduras the Roman Catholic Church has lost its political power, and the government is very vigilant lest the Church regain any of its lost ground politically. The government schools are purely secular. In private and parochial schools observance of the laws regulating elementary education in its bearing upon religious freedom of the individual is required.

With the loss of its political power the Church has lost much of its prestige. However, in places it still has a strong hold upon

the consciences of the lower illiterate classes and upon the women in general. The low moral and educational standard of many of the priesthood has added much to alienate the thinking class from the Church. Moreover, the Church appears to make little effort to provide higher education, for which there is so great a need.

B. Idolatrous Practices

Close observers affirm that with these more ignorant people the worship of the saints is mere idolatry; that while originally the idea was to win the saints' intereession with the Lord, it now has degenerated into the belief that the image of a saint, of Mary, or of the Lord himself ean do miracles and give aid. There is a "Señor de Esquipulas"—a black image of the Lord—in the church of Esquipulas in Guatemala near the Honduran border which is reputed to perform miracles and to which many make pilgrimages when in affliction or in pressing need. Even small replieas of this Señor de Esquipulas, which can be bought there and which go by the name of "Santo" (The Saint of the Lord of Esquipulas), are believed to be able to do miracles.

There lives an aged woman in our area who is the possessor of such a "Santo de Esquipulas." It is merely a crucifix about 12 inches high and proportionately broad, made of red round and polished wood with a figure of the Christ on it about three inches long and all black. This is kept in a glass-covered case on a shelf in the bedroom of the owner. Hung about the cross are some small trinkets and ornaments, gifts by petitioners for miraculous help received from the Santo. When there is sickness in a neighbor's house the Santo is petitioned to come and help, and after obtaining the consent of the owner by an adequate remuneration, it is taken in solemn procession to the house where its help is wanted, and where its presence, especially if beheld and looked upon by the sick, is believed to render the desired cure. After a successful service the Santo, carried upon a litter in the shade of an umbrella, is returned home in triumphant procession, led by flower-bedecked children and followed by some sort of a band. Protection upon a journey is secured by the paying of a required sum to the owner for offering petitions. When sons of neighbors have to report for their required term of military service, fifty cents to the owner of the Santo is believed to secure protection and safe return. The owner naturally feels assured of her own salvation by virtue and

merit of possessing the Santo and of constant and ardent worship of this image.

Others of more means give over an entire room of their house to the Santo. A woman in San Pedro Sula has in one corner of a room an altar with a large crucifix. Other, smaller altars, on each a figure of the mother of Christ, are decorated with pictures from the life of Christ and of saints. Before the altar of the "Senior" (Lord) there is a prayer-stool, where the owner offers her daily prayers. The pride shown by the woman appears to be merely that of possession. She cannot possibly have an understanding of the significance of the invisible Lord or of the triumphant faith of the

Oldest Church in Country. Truxillo is said to have been founded by Columbus

martyrs. She believes that the possession of these visible representations is of itself meritorious and that the pictures and images themselves are able to render help and miracles. In cases where the understanding is a little more enlightened, it is believed that the invisible Lord and the mediators (saints) will give ear more readily when petitioned at such prepared places of worship and intercession. As in the great majority of cases ignorance and superstition prevail, one need not fear that one has exaggerated when asserting that these forms of religious worship are little better than, or advanced above, the idol worship practiced by the pagan forefathers of these peoples or by the pagans of the heathen lands of Asia and Africa.

C. Religious Festivals

At Christmas much of the same enjoyment of a "Merry Christmas" as in other Christian countries is also found in Honduras. On the part of the Church, there are the special mass and other services for the few who attend; and in some instances there are also a Christmas tree and gifts for the children. The latter is now chiefly in the hands of the municipalities, who are making some effort to care for their poor and needy. They help enliven the celebration by band concerts in the public plaza, public balls, and moving picture exhibitions. There are also the processions which have degenerated into a travesty of Christ's birth into this world as Man. Some of the devout women of means put up special booths in their yards in which they have figures grouped to picture the scene in the stable of Bethlehem.

Easter is observed by daily church services during Holy Week. To interest the general public, processions are arranged. There are also processions gotten up by boys, who make up a huge figure of Judas, the traitor, with which they parade the streets and which they finally hang and burn. Pentecost seems to be little observed.

D. Patron Saint's Day

Besides these cardinal Christian festivals, about the only other one observed is the Patron Saint's Day. This is the most important of all the festivals. Almost every town and village has its patron saint, to whom it looks for intercession and protection. For San Pedro Sula it is Saint Peter. The program for the feast is drawn up by special committees appointed by the municipality, and for each of the nine days sport events and concerts are provided. There are horse races, foot races, bicycle and other races, in which prizes are won. There are concerts and fireworks every evening and some public movie shows in the open. The church program provides for holy mass services every morning and special services in the evening, with a separate program for the last and greatest day, when a service for the patron saint is held at which a choir trained for the event sings and a sermon in praise of St. Peter is delivered. On the last day there is a parade with a life-size figure of the patron saint, a procession in which the priest in his vestments, the choristers, and some of the women and children who still believe in the church take part. They carry a crucifix, banners, images of lesser saints, and a variety of flags. Although the town is filled

with people every evening of the festival, the attendance at the services in the church and at the procession is poor.

E. A Need Yet to Be Met

The four centuries of Spanish rule and influence have not made this country Christian. Neither has the same period of domination of the Roman Catholic Church done this for the population. The Catholic church has few benevolent and educational institutions and does not reach more than about ten percent of the population. A greater effort must be made to improve upon present methods and conditions to meet crying needs.

Knowing this fact, having learned of the great need for the Gospel, and convinced that the Gospel alone can give the power that will prevent greater moral degeneration and spiritual decline in a people untouched by true Christianity—should we not go ahead with greater devotion and aggressiveness?

F. Who Is to Meet It?

Are we our brother's keeper? As a nation we are willing enough to be his keeper commercially, economically, and financially, and some would be willing enough to be that also politically. Are we as Christians equally ready and willing to be our brother's keeper spiritually and to give where others come to take? As Christians we owe a debt to the nations of Asia and Africa, as we have all along acknowledged; why not also to the peoples of these so-called Catholic countries?

Review Questions

1. In what way does a purely nominal connection with Christianity, on the part of the people, hinder the work of the missionaries?
2. How might it also help?

CHAPTER IV. THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH ENTERS HONDURAS

The reasons for foreign mission work and the methods of carrying on and extending such activities have been subjected to much "re-thinking" of late. Do you feel that our Church was and is justified in carrying on missionary activities in Honduras?

A. The Call to the Field

The Church has ever held that missions are not a human enterprise, but God's own work, authorized, directed, and guided by himself. Thus, while we have received the call to go and preach the Gospel to every creature, we believe that we must look for special guidance as to just where we are to go in the world. The Apostle Paul received such direction. He was prevented by the Spirit from going into certain places and felt called by that same Spirit to go to others. Sometimes he was given a miraculous call, as when, in a vision, the man from Macedonia beckoned him: "Come over and help us." Sometimes he saw such guidance in perfectly natural events. Often violent persecutions against which he found himself helpless directed him to go on. All his movements were characterized by a spirit of assurance and confidence.

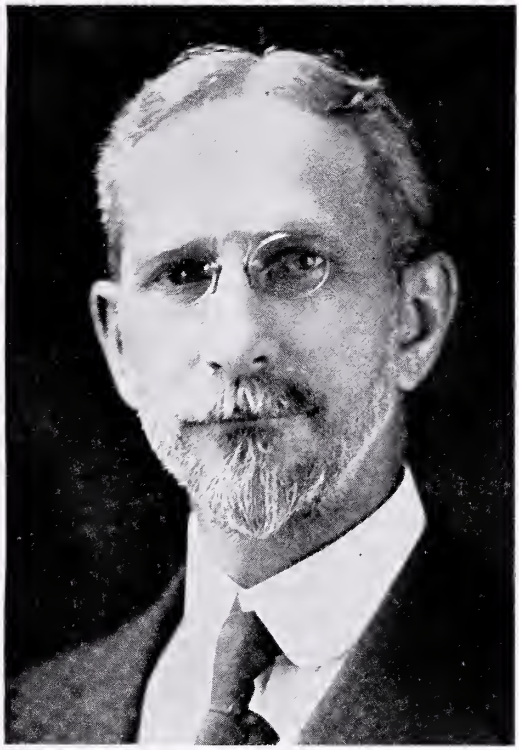
Now have we as a Church reasonable evidence of possessing a call to Honduras?

Early in the year 1917 the thought arose in the minds of a number of our friends that the time had come for our Evangelical Church to extend her missionary operations. It is not necessary here to enumerate the reasons that prompted this thought, but wherever, at first in a private way, it was discussed, it met with favor. Everybody felt the evident duty of doing more than heretofore for the evangelization of the world, not only by increasing our work in India, but by doing such work in some other part of the world. The only questions arising in every serious heart were: Whither does the Lord point us for a second field? Has he given us any indication at all of his further will in the matter? And do we know that the hour has now come?

We believe that such indications were given, as related in the following account from the pen of the chairman of the Foreign Mission Board, appearing in the early summer of 1918 in the columns of our Evangelical Herald.

We quote the following from this account of Dr. Menzel:

"One afternoon, last July, I was about to leave the house for a pastoral visit when a tall man with the appearance of a foreigner met me at the door. In somewhat broken English he told me that he came from Honduras, in Central America, and would like to talk to me about taking the Gospel to his homeland. As I could not find time to discuss the matter just then, I made an appointment with him for the following day. He had come to Washington



Dr. Paul A. Menzel, who had the vision and the faith to see in Honduras a missionary field for the Evangelical Church

in the interest of an invention he had made and which he hoped to have patented here. He expected to remain in the country several months. As he had seen my church he had thought to find someone in the parsonage interested in the spreading of the Gospel in his native land. He himself had found his Saviour through the work of a few missionaries in his country, of whom, unfortunately, there were only very few, and the people in Honduras, largely of Spanish,

Indian, or mixed descent, were so neglected in a religious way that a great deal of effort would be necessary. His countrymen, though nominally Christians, were content with empty forms of worship, knowing nothing of the living Lord who makes men new and happy. And yet they were all eager for the message of the Gospel, and he was sure that missionaries might win many souls by skillful, loving, kindly service and education.

"Of course, I desired to know more about the man and to be satisfied as to his sincerity. During the following months he gave me many opportunities for this. He came to my home often and discussed many Biblical questions and matters with me. I could not but recognize with growing joy his knowledge of the Scripture and his always sober but none the less warm and earnest disposition. Was it possible that his request: 'Help that the Gospel may be brought to my land!' was a divine call to our Church? or rather could it be anything else?

"Together we examined the map of his country. Several Honduran ports on the Atlantic side may once a week be reached by fruit steamer from New Orleans in three and one-half to four days for $45-$50. The coast districts have a semi-tropical climate and form one of the main sources for the gigantic banana trade with our country. Fifty miles from the coast one reaches the mountain country, with beautiful forests and a milder climate. The total population of the country is not more than 650,000 souls, scattered over a territory somewhat larger than the state of Louisiana and somewhat smaller than the state of New York. At present railroads are found only along the coast. A well-made automobile road leads to the capital, Tegucigalpa, from the Pacific coast; the usual means of conveyance are mules.

"As representatives of the Central American Mission, there are in Honduras one married couple in a suburb of Tegucigalpa, an unmarried missionary in Dulcenombre, and one in Colinas. Some independent missionaries work more or less regularly at four or five points. The Quakers have a man and wife in Tegucigalpa, and the Adventists are beginning to disturb the smaller evangelical churches already existing. In addition to this there are wide stretches of country with a population in smaller villages of from 1,000 to 4,000 inhabitants and rural districts in which the Roman Catholic Church has a few scattered congregations, without, however, offering real spiritual life anywhere. South America has been

called the neglected continent. Central America, including the Republic of Honduras, bears the same character. And the more one learns about the conditions, both spiritual and intellectual, the more one also learns to appreciate the importance of the question my visitor put to me: 'I would like to know whether you could not help me bring the Gospel to my country?'

"Last autumn my new acquaintance returned to his home. Before he left, I had, on his advice, inquired of the secretary of the Central American Mission as to the desirability of another Church's entering the work in Honduras. I was referred to the missionary in one of the suburbs of Tegucigalpa. When the question was submitted to the Board at its meeting last autumn, the gathering of further information was authorized.

"The securing of the desired information was attended by some delay. The first letter brought only a provisional reply and led to other questions. The reply to these questions seemed to be unduly delayed. The time of the spring meeting of the Board approached and more than once a prayer ascended to the throne of God: 'Lord, if it be thy will that we should see clearly in this matter, then guide things in such a way that we may receive the information in time.'

"The meeting was to be opened on April 9, 1918, at 10 A. M., and behold, with the first mail, a little after 9 o'clock, two letters postmarked 'Tegucigalpa' arrived. The long desired replies had at last come!"

B. The Response of the Evangelical Church

"When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Much more does he make one of his own children to be of one accord with him. When the plan of a second mission field was given out, immediately there came a number of favorable responses, and what seems most significant—some of the most generous ones came all the way from India. Our foreign missionaries, who might have been expected to be afraid of competition and to fear for the adequate support of their own field, strongly urged taking up work, aside from India, in another place. One of them even promised a contribution of $50 as soon as the first worker were commissioned to a second field.

But even a thorough investigation of the question would cost money, which was then not available. The facts, as quoted from the Evangelical Herald, were published and called forth further

responses. Some of these were accompanied by gifts, none of them large at first, but offered in a fine, willing spirit. It was estimated that about one thousand dollars would be needed, and soon this sum was more than provided.

In one case a workman called on the writer and asked, "When are you going to open work in Honduras?" "We are waiting for the funds for an investigation tour," he was told. "You are?" he replied, "I hope you will not delay unduly. My two boys and I have been blessed these months with steady jobs, and so we have resolved to make a thank-offering in the name of all three of us. We want it to be used for missions, but in the first place, if possible, for Honduras."

With that the speaker drew a roll of bills from his pocket and counted out, dollar for dollar—fifty of them. In several cases Liberty bonds were contributed to be set to work, this time in spiritual warfare.

The largest gifts, as figures go, came in as a happy sequence to a serious disappointment. When it had virtually been decided to send a commission of three to Honduras, the greatest difficulty arose in finding, besides two pastors, a Christian business man. The time of departure of the commission was drawing near. Invitations had been sent to several gentlemen, only to be declined in each case. Finally a friend indicated a St. Louis business man as a possible candidate. He seemed to be the last hope and his reply was eagerly awaited, when, lo! he too, on account of health conditions, had to send a negative reply. But "in order to enable someone else who might lack the means to go to take part in the work which I think highly necessary"—he gave a contribution of $500, which was considered by the Board, if such were necessary, as the final compelling reason for going on with the project. How could one help feeling that the Lord Himself had created a willingness in the heart of this giver as well as of the others?

The commission, consisting of two ministers set out on their errand Easter Sunday night, April 20th, 1919. Their entire trip was marked by a succession of providences too numerous to be recounted here. An unexpected hitch in the issuing of the passport of the Rev. F. Frankenfeld, one of the members, was happily removed at the last moment. When the two men landed at Puerto Cortes, they found that, on account of a misunderstanding, the expected interpreter and guide was not coming to meet them on the

coast, and they therefore had to make the trip alone, among strange people and with no adequate command of a foreign language. Fortunately a letter from the former Honduran visitor at Washington, written months before, contained some indications of a route of travel, and by the good providence of the Lord this letter had been taken along upon leaving home.

Both travelers were unaccustomed to the hardships of strenuous mule-back riding over crude mountain trails, amid a total lack of the comforts of life and even the opportunities of finding restful lodging places at night. Both, however, were sustained bodily and spiritually. To their joy they found, step by step, evidences of the Lord's guiding hand, in bringing them into touch with the people best able to give them advice, in granting them the confidence of the few mission workers they were able to meet, in permitting them to see both the spiritual needs of the country and the possibilities of giving out the Gospel invitation. They were disappointed in their plan to find a field of work on the Pacific slope. However, the evidence came to them all the more clearly that the north coast was not only spiritually destitute and that work done there would not interfere with the work of others, but that this section presented a particular need, in that foreign enterprise and commerce were invading the land and increasing the dangers of worldliness and materialism. As they thought matters over on the way home, there was no doubt in their minds as to what they should suggest to the churches awaiting their report. School work, in Spanish and English, and medical work ought to be established in order to gain a foothold. An institution similar to a Y. M. C. A. should be provided to meet the special needs of the young men, taking into account the increasing number of Americans coming to the country as well as the young Hondurans with higher aspirations. In addition, there must be the continual visiting, inviting, and testifying of evangelists, going in and out among the people, in villages and on farms, and becoming interpreters of the Gospel to them. The great problem would be to find one or two men who would be qualified to begin this work. They should have previous experience in missionary work, with special educational or medical training. Had the Lord such people in store for us? What further evidence of his guidance would it be if this were the case?

The report of the two investigators was presented to the Foreign Mission Board in June, and the Board immediately took up the

question: Could two such men meeting the above qualifications be found? Behold, this was the case. As far as the medical man was concerned, uncontrollable circumstances delayed an appointment. But the educational missionary was not only found, but became available in the person of the Rev. H. A. Dewald of Copperas Cove, Texas. He had performed valuable service in the school work of the Basel Society and the British Colonial Government on the Gold Coast, West Africa. After brief correspondence this Society was found willing to release him for the time being, and he saw in the call of the Board the Lord's call for further work and service. At the Board meeting at Portsmouth, Ohio, in October, 1919, where final arrangements were made, the friend who had so materially helped to finance the investigation tour was present and gave further evidence of his growing interest in the work.

"You will need larger sums as our first representative gets on his way," he argued. "I am willing to supplement the first $4,000 with another thousand. In other words, I will add twenty-five percent to any and all special gifts for Honduras up to a total of $4,000."

Rev. Dewald arrived in Honduras on New Year's Day, 1920. A little more than a year before, our Board had stood, uncertain and questioning, looking toward Honduras and wondering whether the Lord wanted us to go there. At the beginning of 1920 we were represented in that country by our first messenger of the Gospel.

Our Board of Foreign Missions and those who had joined them in this new venture of faith felt confident that the Lord was leading them through the early beginnings of missionary work in Honduras and that he would continue to bless their efforts to lead Honduras to him.

Review Questions

1. What interesting comparisons can you make between the beginnings of our work in Honduras and in India? (See *Missionary Trails*, Evangelical Synod of North America, Part II.)

CHAPTER V. AN INTRODUCTION TO OUR MISSIONARIES

What consideration do we as members of the church owe our missionaries? Are they entitled to a personal interest on our part and a sense of sharing the responsibility with them, or do you feel that they alone have been set apart to do this work for us, as one naive woman expressed it: "I guess you missionaries are supposed to make sacrifices; that's why God made you."

A. "Separated Unto the Gospel of God"

This is the fifteenth year of our Evangelical Mission in Honduras. Since our occupancy, there has been little change in the personnel of the field. Other things being equal—good health, etc.—our missionaries understand that they are volunteering for life service. Some few who formerly served are for legitimate reasons no longer engaged in the work. It is the purpose of this chapter to make known our staff to whom we have entrusted a commission to the Hondurans of Central America. More than the confidence placed in these men and women by the Evangelical Synod is the commission given them by our Lord and Master, who said, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

At the end of this chapter there will be found a list of the mis-

Missionary group

sionaries who have served in Honduras since the beginning of the work there, together with dates of entering or leaving the field.

1. The Rev. Henry A. Dewald

The Rev. Henry A. Dewald was sent to Honduras in January, 1920, on a trip of investigation by the Board of Foreign Missions. Mr. Dewald was especially fitted for such a commission, having served for twelve years in school and organization work on the Gold Coast in British West Africa, under the direction of the Basel Mission of Switzerland. The first thing Mr. Dewald did in Honduras was to spend over a year in San Pedro Sula studying the language, making trips for observation, seeking points of contact, and devising ways and means of organizing missionary work in Honduras. He returned to the States in August, 1921, to lay his findings before the General Conference at New Bremen, Ohio. At that Conference Honduras was accepted as the Church's second mission field. Thereupon Mr. Dewald definitely entered into the service of the Evangelical Board of Foreign Missions and returned to Honduras in January, 1922.

In February, 1921, Mr. and Mrs. Auler and their twin boys sailed for Honduras.

2. The Rev. Harold N. Auler

The Rev. Harold N. Auler was born at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. After graduation from Elmhurst College and Eden Seminary he volunteered for service in India, but the World War closed the way to that field. He did not, however, withdraw his application, and while waiting for the way to open to the foreign field, he took over the work at Caroline Mission, St. Louis. Here he was ably assisted by Mrs. Auler, née Louise Esser, who had, previous to their marriage, been a worker at this city mission.

3. Mrs. Harold N. Auler

Mrs. Auler was born in St. Louis, Mo. She was educated in the St. Louis public schools. After her graduation from high school she was employed in a railroad office during the day and attended a night school for Christian workers at the St. Louis Y. W. C. A. Later she became a worker at the Caroline Mission.

After two years at Caroline Mission, the Aulers were commissioned to our newly opened field in Honduras. They found their particular field of service in evangelism and personal work, not only in San Pedro Sula, but in the villages, camps, on the farms,

and among the scattered huts that may be found hidden away in the mountains. They have enjoyed uninterrupted service since then. In 1926 the Rev. Mr. Auler was appointed Chairman of the Honduras Mission Conference, and since the opening of the new station in Yoro he is acting pastor of the First Evangelical Church in San Pedro Sula and in Chamelecon.

Mrs. Auler serves in many different ways. Visitation, Sunday school work, and evangelistic trips with Mr. Auler constitute a part of her services.

4. Miss Anna D. Bechtold

Before the Auler family sailed for Honduras in 1921, they were met in New Orleans by Miss Anna D. Bechtold. Miss Bechtold had been trained for the teaching profession in the University of Kansas and had taught English in the Wichita High School. Attendance at the Elmhurst Leadership Training School had given her an insight into the spiritual needs of Honduras. Miss Bechtold thereupon had offered her services to her Church and on January 23, 1921, was commissioned as a missionary to Honduras. On February 14, 1921, she arrived at Puerto Cortes with Mr. and Mrs. Auler. Miss Bechtold founded Bethany, the boarding home for girls, and also the day school. The boarding home is now superintended by others, but the school is still under her direction as principal. She is also active in evangelism and Sunday school work. Her Sunday school class, "Mensajeras de la Luz" (Messengers of Light), is composed of young women of high school age.

5. Mrs. Henry Dewald

Another worker, Miss Gertrude Riecke of St. Louis, was sent to Honduras in the following year. A course at Moody Bible Institute had brought her in touch with the needs of Latin America, the Student Volunteer Movement, and the Board of Foreign Missions. After her graduation from the Institute, Miss Riecke took a short course in nursing at the Evangelical Deaconess Hospital, St. Louis, and a summer course at the Harris Teachers' College in St. Louis. She arrived on the field February 14, 1922, one year after the first missionaries. School, Sunday school work, weekly visits to the city hospital, and emergency calls were her special fields of service.

In October, 1923, Mr. Dewald and Miss Gertrude Riecke were united in marriage. For reasons of health, Mr. and Mrs. Dewald in the fall of 1928 were compelled to leave their work in Honduras

and to take up the service in the homeland. They found a fruitful field for their labor in a home mission church in Atlanta, Georgia.

6. Mrs. Edith Moulton Melick

In the fall of 1922 Mrs. Edith Moulton Melick was called to serve in Honduras as matron of the girls' boarding home. Most of her early life had been spent in Plainfield, N. J., where she worked for a time in a business office. In the fall of 1903 Miss Moulton was united in marriage to David Melick of North Branch, N. J., where they resided until Mr. Melick's death in 1906. Again Mrs. Melick turned to business, until she entered Moody Bible Institute in 1920. While at the Institute she met several young people of the Evangelical Synod, and within five days after her graduation she received a call to Honduras. She arrived at San Pedro Sula, October 31, 1922. Mrs. Melick's health, however, did not permit her to stay in the tropics, and in August, 1924, she reluctantly returned. Another trip was made in 1927 for a four months' visit and the preparation of a handbook on our missionary enterprise there. *Seed Sowing in Honduras* was the result of this visit.

7. Miss Elise Goepfarth

A year later we find a new teacher arriving to assist Miss Bechtold in the day school in San Pedro Sula. Miss Elise Goepfarth of Richmond, Va., arrived on the field on September 15, 1923, and was placed in charge of the first-grade children. Miss Goepfarth was well qualified for this work. From her earliest recollection she was interested in teaching. She played teacher at six years of age; she coached her fellow students during the last term of high school; she graduated from Richmond Training School for Kindergartners and later studied at the School of Social Work and Public Health, Richmond, and at Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York, as well as at an art school.

Miss Goepfarth's first field of service had been at Lynchburg, Va., as kindergarten and settlement worker among the cotton mill employees. While there, her Christian life was deepened, and with the deepening came a desire to work on the foreign field. Two years of training at Moody Bible Institute and one year of service as assistant to her pastor in Richmond preceded her entering the field of Honduras.

During her first term of teaching she also gathered boys from the streets for a Sunday school class, organized the children's work,

instituted systematic house-to-house visitation and founded a submission in Barrio Medina, a section of San Pedro Sula. Much of her time is now devoted to conducting children's meetings. Her chief concern is to make the Honduran see what she discovered in the cotton mill town, that "in Christ alone is salvation, and in Christ alone is cleansing." At present she is engaged several days each week, with a native helper, in Puerto Cortes, where very definite progress is manifest.

8. Miss Louise Vordenberg

The need for teachers in our school at San Pedro Sula continually increased, and this need was to be met by Miss Louise Vordenberg. Miss Vordenberg was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she grew to womanhood and entered into the church life of Price Hill Evangelical Church. She began a business career as accountant and bookkeeper. While she attended night classes to perfect herself in her chosen profession, another influence was working in her life that brought her to a complete consecration of herself to the Master, in Christian service. Her attention was directed to Honduras, and she offered herself for this work. During the interval of waiting, she took a full Bible course at Moody Bible Institute. She sailed for Honduras in January, 1924, and joined the ranks of our missionary teachers. She fitted well into the general evan-

Approaching Yoro

gelistic program. In the fall of 1926 she took over Bethany, the boarding home for girls. This home was under her direction until her first furlough. Since her return, she has been conducting children's meetings and special classes in the school, visiting native homes, and has full charge of the weekly evangelistic services in La Lima, both in the Sunday school and in the preaching service.

9. The Rev. Frederick Andres

Like the Rev. Mr. Dewald, the next missionary to be called to Honduras had previously served on the Gold Coast of British West Africa. This was the Rev. Frederick Andres, born in the Palatinate, Germany. At the age of fifteen Frederick Andres had secretly pledged himself to become a missionary. His dreams were realized, and he was permitted to work in Africa for five years. When British war measures put an end to the Basel Mission work on the Gold Coast, the Rev. Mr. Andres returned to Europe. In 1920 he was married to Miss Lina Schuetthelm of Mannheim, Baden, and in 1922 they sailed for America. Mr. Andres accepted a pastorate in Marshfield, Wisconsin. He remained here until called by the Board of Foreign Missions to Honduras in the beginning of 1924. Upon arrival they took up the work among the German-speaking people. They were the first house-parents of Bethel, the newly organized boarding home for boys, and Mr. Andres was the first pastor of the Chamelecon congregation. During the last years of his stay in San Pedro Sula he took over the duties as pastor of the First Evangelical Church there. Mr. Andres for years found a large field of service in evangelistic trips to outlying districts. After completing a tour of investigation through the Departments of Yoro and Olanchito in the company of the Rev. Mr. Herrscher, he and Mrs. Andres spent a year in Salamá investigating the possibilities of this place as a permanent mission station. The choice of the Mission Conference fell upon Yoro rather than upon Salamá, and in June, 1934, Mr. and Mrs. Andres established the mission station at Yoro, where they are now working with evident success.

10. Mrs. Frederick Andres

Mrs. Andres, who had early been led to Christ by a Christian governess, says that while on a visit to the Christian summer resort "Schoenblick," in Wuerttemberg, "God gave my way a new turn and my life a new aim." Mrs. Andres is an accomplished violinist,

and she has not spared her talent in the service of her Master in Honduras. She shares her husband's missionary zeal and burden to the full and has been active in the work among the women and children in the homes, in Sunday school, and in ministering to the sick. In order to do this latter work better, she devoted her last furlough to a special course of study in the Tropengenesungsheim at Tuebingen, Germany.

11. Miss Bertha M. Scheidt

In the fall of 1924 the teaching staff was further increased by the arrival of Miss Bertha M. Scheidt. Miss Scheidt received her early education in the school of her birthplace, Van Wert, Ohio. After graduation she taught in the Junior High School of Van Wert and at Connersville, Indiana. While at the latter place, Miss Scheidt came to a decision that gave an early desire the right of way. A visit with her deaconess sister, Sister Minnie Scheidt, at "Sunny Rest," Colorado Springs, confirmed her decision. Long ago the consistent life of Sister Minnie had created in the younger sister a desire to enter Christian work, and the silent, prayerful influence of the workers at "Sunny Rest," the opportunities for service, and the quiet working of the Spirit led Miss Scheidt to a definite decision of complete consecration. Obstacles were overcome. A two years' course in Moody Bible Institute, another year of teaching in her home town, and a call from the Board of Foreign Missions without her solicitation led Miss Scheidt to Honduras in September, 1924. Her tasks on the field have been varied, taking her into the classroom and out into evangelistic work. In both of these she has shown splendid talents and earnest consecration.

12. Miss Louise Kurz

More than two years passed before another missionary sailed for Honduras. This was Miss Louise Kurz of Louisville, Ky. Miss Kurz attributes her missionary interest to the influence and information gained through reading missionary literature and listening to missionary speakers. It was after an address each by Dr. J. Gass and Mrs. Gass, who spoke in one of the Louisville churches, that Miss Kurz expressed her desire to become a missionary. She entered Moody Bible Institute for a full Bible course. After graduation she received a call from her home church to become their parish worker. There she served for three years. During this time

the desire to become a missionary was not put aside. It was a time of waiting, and hoping, and praying for the way to open.

The Rev. H. A. Dewald visited St. Paul's Church in Louisville, Ky., in 1925 and presented the needs of Honduras. The pastor was touched, the congregation was fired with enthusiasm, and the parish worker was ready to go. Miss Kurz, called by the Board of Foreign Missions in the fall of 1926 and commissioned from her home church, sailed for Honduras in January, 1927. She was placed in charge of Bethany, the boarding home for girls, and also found a wide field of service later on as the able assistant to Sister Hulda Sturm in caring for the sick.

13. The Rev. Walter Herrscher

A new director also took charge of Bethel, the boys' boarding home, in the fall of 1928. This was the Rev. Walter Herrscher, who, together with Mrs. Herrscher, arrived in Puerto Cortes on October 4, 1927. Mr. Herrscher had received his religious training in his home at his mother's knee and in Nazareth Evangelical Church, St. Louis, Mo. Having a mechanical turn of mind, he entered the David Ranken Junior School of Mechanical Trades in St. Louis; but he did not feel satisfied until he entered Elmhurst College. His next step was a complete course in Eden Theological Seminary. After his marriage to Miss Martha Fiedler of St. Louis, the couple took up home missionary work in Sacramento, California.

Mr. and Mrs. Herrscher volunteered for mission work in Honduras and joined the staff in 1927. For a number of years they were in charge of Bethel, and Mr. Herrscher was pastor of the Evangelical Church in Chamelecon. In the Foreign Mission Jubilee Year, 1934, the Herrschers founded a new station at Pinalejo, approximately 50 miles southwest of San Pedro Sula. Shortly after opening this new station, Mr. Herrscher founded a theological seminary there, where in future, it is hoped, the evangelistic workers required by the mission can be trained.

14. Mrs. Walter Herrscher

Mr. Herrscher is ably assisted by Mrs. Herrscher, who began her career as a business woman, having graduated from St. Louis University in Commerce and Finance. Later she attended the Biblical Seminary in New York City to prepare for Christian work. Her interest in missions dates back to her confirmation days under the

Rev. Geo. Poth, then pastor of Nazareth Evangelical Church, who also had been a missionary on the Gold Coast of Africa and a co-worker of the Rev. H. A. Dewald. Mrs. Herrscher was the first president of the Women's Federation of Northern California and with Mr. Herrscher assisted in the development of the Golden West Evangelical Leadership Training School.

15. Sister Hulda Sturm

Until 1928 there was no Evangelical medical missionary in Honduras. There still is no doctor on our field, but in September, 1928, a deaconess nurse, Sister Hulda Sturm, arrived in San Pedro Sula. Sister Hulda is a daughter of the Rev. C. F. Sturm, who has for many years been the superintendent of our Evangelical Home for Epileptics at Marthasville, Mo. Miss Sturm has known the meaning of service for the Master from her earliest recollections. She entered the St. Louis Deaconess Hospital in 1915 and was graduated in 1919 as a deaconess and registered nurse. Sister Hulda Sturm served eight years in hospital work and five years as the parish deaconess of St. James Church, St. Louis. At the same time she attended evening classes at Brookes Bible Institute, being graduated from there in 1925. She sailed for Honduras in September, 1928. In the absence of a physician, she gave treatment to about 430 persons in 1929 alone. She conducts classes in hygiene, examinations of school children, and dispenses medicines as a part of her routine work. Much of her work lies in the outlying villages that she must reach by automobile or on muleback to minister to a suffering humanity that cannot come to San Pedro Sula to see her. At present she is also conducting a practical nurses' training school in Pinalejo.

B. "Strive Together with Me in Your Prayers"

Fifteen men and women have thus had a part in conducting the missionary enterprise during the past fifteen years in Honduras. Three of their number are no longer members of the Honduras Conference. Others are in the States on furlough. Nine members are usually on the field, and these nine must carry on the work assigned to twelve persons. Let us remember them in our prayers, that their strength, their courage, and their faith fail not and that they may be conscious of the faithfulness of our Lord, who said, "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Our Missionaries —
Dates of Entering and Leaving Honduras

January, 1920-1928. The Rev. Henry A. Dewald.
February, 1921. The Rev. H. N. Auler and Mrs. Auler.
February, 1921. Miss Anna D. Bechtold.
February, 1922-1928. Mrs. Gertrude Riecke Dewald.
October, 1922-1924. Mrs. Edith Moulton Melick.
September, 1923. Miss Elise A. Goepfarth.
January, 1924. Miss Louise Vordenberg.
March, 1924. The Rev. Frederick Andres and Mrs. Andres.
September, 1924. Miss Bertha M. Scheidt.
January, 1927. Miss Louise Kurz.
October, 1927. The Rev. Walter H. Herrscher and Mrs. Herrscher.
September, 1928. Sister Hulda Sturm.

Review Questions

1. How many of these missionaries have you met personally?
2. What articles have you read by any of them?
3. What have you read or heard about their work?
4. Supplement these brief sketches of our missionaries with material from the *Evangelical Herald* or the books suggested in the supplementary list.

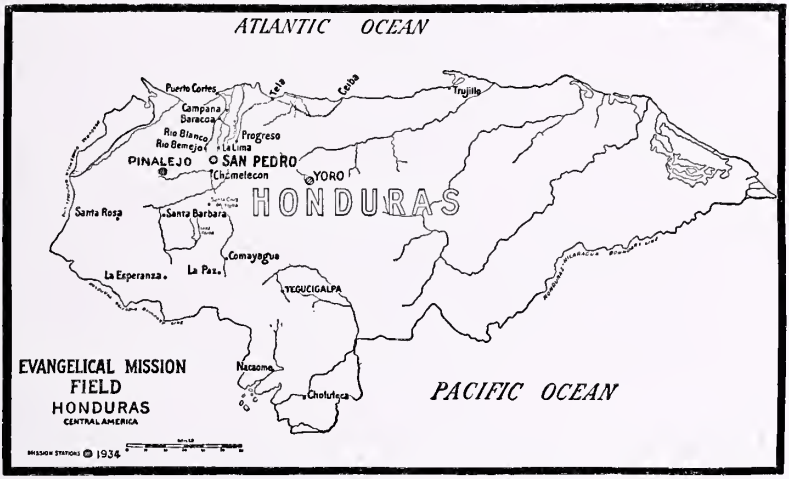
Some homes in Pinalejo

CHAPTER VI. OUR MISSIONARIES AT WORK

Considering the religious and racial background of the people of Honduras, how would you think an approach to missionary work might be made?

A. The Task

Our Church has accepted the spiritual responsibility, in Honduras, for most of the northern coast, about one-third of the Department of Santa Barbara and the Department of Yoro. This comprises a territory about one-sixth as large as the State of Ohio. Since there are only twelve missionaries and five trained evangelists, the task of reaching the people of this area is a large one.



Many different avenues of approach are used. In addition to the preaching services at the regular stations, the work is being carried on by means of Sunday Bible schools, the Mission Day School, Ladies' Aids, an annual Bible conference, medical missions, and evangelism. Personal work by the native Christians themselves has been of outstanding significance.

B. Avenues of Approach

1. Sunday Schools

In San Pedro we now have a Sunday school of about one hundred and fifty members. Forty of these are in the adult class, which is very active in the work of the church. The members of the class make visits in the jail and in the hospital. On Sunday afternoons they go in groups to different sections of the town, distributing

copies of the Gospel and inviting others to the services. In this way they bring many newcomers to the chapel. This adult class also furnishes the ushers for our chapel services and makes special contributions to our work. The members are putting their birthday offerings into a fund for the new chapel, which is badly needed in San Pedro Sula.

A project in which the entire Sunday school took part was the raising of a fund to pay for lumber and other materials for a pavilion built by voluntary workers of the church.

The Sunday school in La Lima is held in a room provided by the United Fruit Company. This place is now far too small for the group that comes, and the crowding-in of so many restless children makes the conducting of the school quite difficult. Services are conducted in this same room on Saturday evenings and a class preparing for baptism also meets here. This work is carried on by a woman missionary, assisted by the evangelist and two teachers.

Chamelecon, our hardest field of work, has a Sunday school numbering about sixty-five. A missionary, a native evangelist, and one native teacher work there. Evening services are conducted on Sundays and twice a month on Thursdays.

Our newest Sunday school, which meets in Puerto Cortes every Sunday evening at 6:30, has an average attendance of about sixty-five. Two native teachers, an evangelist, and a woman missionary serve there. Due to the fact that these workers are busy in other places on Sunday mornings, the Sunday school cannot be conducted until in the evening.

Pinalejo has a fine Sunday school. Many are coming in, and we are happy to say that the attendance is now nearly seventy. In these new places it is hard to win the confidence of the people. Mrs. Herrscher has succeeded in doing this through her good work in ministering to the many sick. The industry and tact of the Rev. Mr. Herrscher, who worked there to get the property in condition for occupation as a mission station, taught people to appreciate what the Gospel means. Now, with the nurses' training school conducted by Sister Hulda Sturm and with the possibility of a day school there, we are expecting great things for Pinalejo.

Yoro, too, has awakened to the Gospel. There are about fifty in the Sunday school. A Bible class for women has been organized. A children's group meets on Saturday afternoons, and this, too, has

meant much for the Sunday school. About ten villages and towns outside of Yoro are showing interest.

Berlin, a village in the mountains, also has a small Sunday school. Here one of our former Bethel boys, a baptized Christian, gathers his relatives and a few neighbors together and through the school is striving to encourage his people to live in a Christian way.

El Chile, with two native Christian families, has a Sunday school numbering about twenty children and six grown-ups. In this way the native Christians are working in their own neighborhoods.

La Lima, a fruit company town, and Tela, the company seaport, have American Sunday schools, conducted by American Christians who have gathered the English-speaking children together. In La Lima about twelve attend and in Tela about forty-five. Monthly visits by the missionary, when he makes a trip to conduct English services for these groups, are appreciated.

2. The Mission School

At present 110 children from San Pedro, including sixteen girls of Bethany Girls' Home who have come to us from towns and villages, attend our mission day school. This Mission school is directed by Miss Bechtold. She is assisted by three native teachers and one of the missionaries, who teaches the English classes. This school has been the means of spreading the Gospel to many places. The school has furnished us with an evangelist and five native teachers, one of whom is in Christian service in a neighboring republic. Some of the girls from non-Christian homes begged to come back and repeat the sixth grade in our school, preferring to be under Christian influence for a longer period.

A need to begin a normal training school for the training of our own teachers has been keenly felt. We hope that such a school may be established in the near future.

Several of our future seminary students are taking work in school or at night under the supervision of the missionaries. A young man, nineteen years of age, preparing for the ministry is still studying third-grade arithmetic and other elementary subjects in this way.

Through the school work many new homes are opened to the Christian workers in Honduras. The new Alumni Association recently organized has been the means of keeping former students in

contact with the Mission. A number of school children have been influential in bringing their parents to the chapel or to the Sunday school.

3. Ladies' Aids

Two Ladies' Aids are organized, the one in San Pedro, numbering twenty members, and the other in Chamelecon, with fourteen members. In both groups about one out of ten women knows how to write, and so it is quite a task to find a secretary. The San Pedro group has its own president, a woman who has been a faithful Christian. Monthly dues amount to two cents or its equivalent. In addition, a free-will offering for benevolences is given. Eggs are often brought instead of money, and sometimes a dozen eggs are found in the offering basket after the meeting. One of the members paid her dues in advance by bringing a chicken valued at twenty-five cents. Many of them buy their Bibles and hymn-books with eggs, often on the installment plan. This causes extra bookkeeping, but it is worth while. Usually, when possible, the topics of the Women's Union are followed. Both groups contribute to the Women's Union and are proud to be united with this group.

4. Annual Bible Conference in San Pedro

On about the fifteenth of September each year the native Christians of the Evangelical Church gather for their three-day Bible conference in San Pedro. Letters are mailed out inviting people to come. Some come on foot, others on mule-back, some by train,

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and others by automobile. As many of the Christians who live in the mountains do not have ready cash, they bring some of their products as an offering for the maintenance of the conference. What an interesting sight as they come with their sacks of beans, corn, coffee, vegetables, potatoes, and the like! This food helps to feed the many who come from out of town.

One of the Christians in Pinalejo promised an ox for this year's conference, another has promised the rice, still another is putting aside two turkeys for the occasion. They are poor, but of their best they give to the cause. The women volunteer for the cooking and the making of the corncakes. To last year's conference one hundred and forty came from out of town.

The same program is followed each morning: An opening prayer, Bible classes, a class on Christian living, and singing under a large mango tree on the lawn of the mission compound. A class on church history and doctrine is given in the afternoon. Special classes with handwork are conducted for the children. In the evening an evangelistic service is open to all, and large crowds attend. Usually a native preacher from the outside is chosen as the guest speaker.

During the conference, the Mission dispensary is open to all. Here they come with their many ills. A hookworm clinic is conducted for several days. An optical department, where the used eye-glasses furnished by friends in the homeland are dispensed, is patronized by many.

These conferences are a special blessing for those who come from out of town and who are only privileged to hear the Word on the occasional visits of the native evangelists and missionaries.

5. Medical Missions

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these . . . ye have done it unto me." A great opportunity for winning souls for the Master has been found in the medical work. Through Sister Hulda's visits to the different villages and her opportunities of administering aid to the sick, the needy, and the dying, many doors have been opened and the Gospel made known.

A medicine kit, some instruments, some food supplies, and bandages are packed into the saddle-bag on a nurse's trip to the interior. After many hours of hard travel on mule-back she reaches the distant homes on the mountainside to find a sick person in almost every home. Due to malnutrition, filthiness, and superstition, many

are found suffering who do not know how to help themselves. Some are tortured by old native remedies.

Can you picture a little native hut on the mountainside, a poor woman on a rope bed, a group of small children trying to help their mother, a filthy kitchen, and a lazy husband? Then imagine a clean missionary nurse coming in and giving some medicine to this poor soul! Nursing in Honduras is quite difficult; for one finds so much superstition, and the native women do not respond to American methods of hygiene. Entrance into a home is not always easy to obtain; sometimes it becomes possible through hearing of a neighbor's recovery from illness, or it may be gained because the nurse has won the confidence of some member of the

Street preaching in San Pedro

family. The missionary finds wonderful opportunities to bring the message of love to sufferers. How ready many are to accept the Gospel; for the real Christian is the only one who cares to help or even dares to come near in the hour of extreme need.

On these trips picture rolls and small picture cards are carried; for in these villages there is no Christian witness, and only as the missionary nurse or other missionaries and the native evangelists pass through these places, is there an opportunity to hear the message. After the nurse has visited the sick, those who have gathered about are glad to listen to a story and a few hymns, and perhaps there is a lesson for the grown-ups and cards with Bible texts are distributed.

One of the newest features in the medical work is the training

of native girls in practical nursing. Through the gifts of the Women's Union, Sister Hulda has begun a training class in Pinalejo with five girls. There will be wonderful opportunities for service in the villages and towns where there are no doctors, no drug stores, where, in fact, no one understands medicine. A wide door of opportunity has been opened to Christian girls in Honduras to lead their fellow-men to the Great Physician, through this service.

6. Evangelism

Much of the evangelistic work done in outlying districts has been made possible by the Gospel truck furnished by friends in the homeland. This is a great help in reaching many places where the missionaries feel that even on poor roads more ground can be covered in less time than if they traveled on mule-back. Traveling over flat country on a hot day on mule-back is probably one of the most tiresome experiences in the tropics.

However, in the rainy season, when the rivers are swollen, that is the only way of travel to the interior of the country. Honduras, a mountainous country, does not boast highways, and reaching the out-of-the-way places means climbing up and down along the little trails on the mountainsides. During the past few years, the evangelistic committee in San Pedro has outlined different circuits on which a missionary or two with a native evangelist spend from ten to fifteen days, thus reaching about fifteen or twenty towns and villages. These circuits are repeated each month. At the end of one circuit, the mules are left at a certain place and another missionary and native evangelist tour another circuit in a different section.

In the meantime another group is carrying on evangelistic work in the little towns along the railroad where people are showing interest in the Gospel.

In Yoro, Missionary Andres and wife spend two days and a night each week in the neighboring villages. On another day, the missionary and his native evangelist go out, while the missionary's wife takes care of the sick and the children's work in the town.

Pinalejo offers a splendid opportunity for evangelization, as there are about twelve towns and villages within close range. A native evangelist is now stationed there. Having charge of the seminary takes most of the missionary's time; however, short trips to some nearby villages are made now and then.

7. Personal Work of Native Christians

"Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The native Christians are heeding Christ's command that we are to be his witnesses. Where can they witness for him? If not at home, then on the outskirts of the town and in the villages. There are great blessings coming from this work.

In our San Pedro congregation there is an organized evangelistic band which meets every Sunday after Sunday school for prayer and the discussion of plans for the afternoon's work. There are four groups who go to four designated places to have out-of-door meetings. Two groups meet in town, one at the market, and the other at the corner opposite the moving picture theater. Why choose these places? That is where the crowds are found. The native evangelists, the members of the Christian Endeavor, and the adult Bible class join in. Only those who really live the Christian life are asked to participate in the meetings.

As the little folding organ is set up, the missionary in charge of the music begins with a few hymns or special music, and soon a crowd is gathered. One of the ways to gain the attention of those just out of the afternoon show is to use the advertisement of the day's picture and build a sermon around it. Educated Hondurans, school teachers, and lawyers will listen at the street corners. Often there is a disturbance caused by some poor drunken man, but soon the police are there to restore order.

While these meetings are being conducted, another group walks to a village about three miles away, and still another group goes on the train to a village four miles away and returns on foot. In Rio Blanco, where our missionaries worked for nearly fourteen years, they have found people who have not responded to their efforts, but after many years of seed-sowing and the endeavor of some of the native Christians, there seems, at last, to be some promise of fruit.

The Christian Endeavor group also visits certain villages during the month. About twenty members are organized and share in the evangelistic work of the congregation. Through their monthly contributions they are able to help defray the expenses of traveling.

An account of the personal work of the native Christians of Honduras would be very incomplete without the story of Don Manuel.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."—Can a blind man say this? Yes, he can and has said so—"Once I was blind, but now I can see; for the light of the world is Jesus." In Yoro, our newest mission station in Honduras, a certain telegraph operator, Don Manuel, after having lost his eyesight through smallpox, spent his days sitting in the home of a fellow operator, a true Christian. This man had given out tracts, copies of the Gospel, and New Testaments in the town of Yoro. When his friend became blind, he offered to have his little daughter read to him. This girl, a mere child of nine years, sat for hours reading hymns from the Spanish hymnal and certain portions of the Bible which her father had chosen for this blind friend. This daily contact with the Word of God and the hymns, so dear to the native Christian, brought to Don Manuel a new light.

Don Manuel

During a recent visit to Yoro, the Rev. Mr. Auler became acquainted with the blind believer and asked him if he would care to read the Word of God. His face beamed as he gladly assented. In a short time he received the Gospel of Mark in Braille, a gift of the American Bible Society. Our resident missionary in Yoro made a board with small nails arranged on it to indicate the alphabet in Braille, and in a week's time Don Manuel could read the Word of God. He now spends his time sitting at the door of his little room and reading to the many who chance to pass by and who stop to see a blind man read. Some have said that the Gospel is a wonderful thing if it can make a blind man read and see. And Don Manuel, being blind, yet may lead many others to see the Light!

Has the work of the past fifteen years in Honduras been worth while? Many in the homeland are asking whether the missionaries can see any results of their labors.

Their first years were spent in plowing the ground and sowing the seed. Today, those who have served during these difficult years of cultivating a virgin field are beginning to see the fruits of their labors.

Do the native Christians remain true to their new faith? Surely their participation in the actual work of sowing more seed for a larger harvest to come is the best answer to this question. "By their fruits shall ye know them."

We look with faith to an ever increasing harvest in Honduras.

Review Questions

1. What impression do you get of the scope of our work in Honduras as you scan this chapter?
2. What impresses you as outstanding in the accomplishments made in the past fifteen years?
3. How may we meet our obligations and avail ourselves of the privilege to share in the work of our missionaries in Honduras?

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING

Evangelicals at Havana, by S. Guy Inman. Committee on Cooperation in Latin America. Paper, 25c.

Looking Ahead with Latin America, by Stanley High. Missionary Education Movement, New York. Paper, 50c.

New Days in Latin America, by Webster E. Browning. Missionary Education Movement. Paper, 60c.

Problems in Pan-Americanism by S. G. Inman. Cloth, $2.00

Roman Christianity in Latin America, by W. E. Browning. Fleming H. Revell. Cloth, $1.00.

Seed Sowing in Honduras, by Edith M. Melick. Eden Publishing House. Paper, 65c.

The Five Republics of Central America, by Dana G. Munro. Oxford University Press. Cloth, $3.50.

Trailing the Conquistadores, by S. G. Inman. Friendship Press. Paper, 60c.

Wall Map of Honduras, indicating our field and stations. Size, 22 x 28 inches. Price, 35c.